Vital Signs - one step at a time

Interview with Ulrike Reichart, Bürgerstiftungen Deutschland (Community Foundations Germany)

You have Vital Signs on your agenda this year - what do you think an approach like Vital Signs can offer?

Vital Signs is a very forward-looking tool for communities and community foundations. It helps community foundations establish and strengthen their local leadership role and improve the collaboration between citizens, local authorities and philanthropic activists. The approach of Vital Signs, identifying local needs by collecting relevant data about significant social and economic trends and to leverage local knowledge to measure the vitality of communities, is a fantastic instrument to consult on and implement action towards improving collective quality of life. I am especially taken with the idea of combining the approach of Vital Signs with the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

What is the experience in Germany so far?

So far the experience in Germany is rather theoretical. Last year we had the chance to introduce Vital Signs to a small number of German community foundations by inviting them to a meeting with representatives of Community Foundations of Canada and by inviting German community foundations to the ECFI Conference in Cardiff 2017, where a Vital Signs session was held. We realised that there is a great interest and willingness in Germany to launch Vital Signs and this calls for action. The first step at present is a feasibility study being undertaken by a German philanthropic consultancy.

How are you proposing to engage Community Foundations in Germany?

Hamburg Community Foundation is among the first community foundations interested to implement Vital Signs in Germany. In collaboration with Hamburg Community Foundation we are planning an ECFI thematic meeting.
on Vital Signs in June this year. At the German Foundation Conference we will host a session about Vital Signs on May 17th. The main task is to inform interested participants about the concept and impact of Vital Signs and to attract potential donors and partners for the implementation of Vital Signs in Germany. And finally we are planning a session on Vital Signs at the annual German community foundations conference in September to engage the wider community foundation field.

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